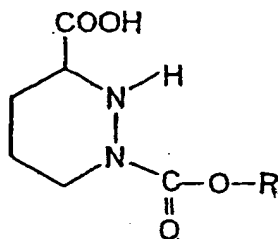


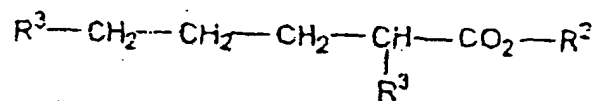
In the Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended) A process for preparing a hexahydropyridazine-3-carboxylic acid derivative of the formula



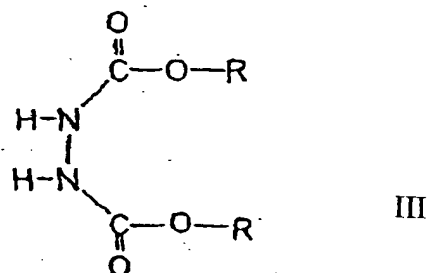
I

wherein R is selected from the group consisting of saturated or unsaturated, substituted or unsubstituted alkyl, substituted or unsubstituted aralkyl substituted or unsubstituted aryl comprising reacting a compound of the formula



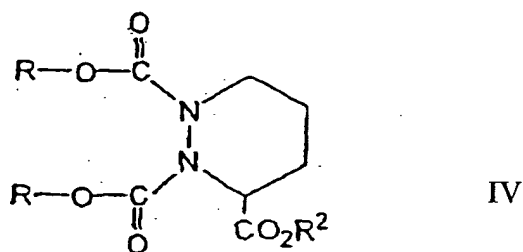
II

wherein R² is substituted or unsubstituted alkyl and R³ is ~~halogen~~ or a nucleofugal organic group, with a compound of the formula



whereas R has the above meaning,

in the presence of a base with a pK_a greater than or equal to 8.5, in an organic ketone solvent to a tetrahydro-1,2,3-pyridazine-tricarboxylate intermediate compound of the formula



wherein R and R^2 have the above meanings, which is not isolated and which is treated with a basic aqueous medium, to obtain the hexahydropyridazine-3-carboxylic acid derivative of formula (I).

Claim 2 (previously presented) The process of Claim 1, wherein the organic ketone solvent is selected from the group consisting of acetone, methyl ethyl ketone, methyl isobutyl ketone, methyl tert-butyl ketone and diisopropyl ketone, and mixtures thereof.

Claim 3 (previously presented) The process of Claim 1 wherein the base used in the first reaction is selected from the group consisting of alkali metal carbonates and tertiary amines.

Claim 4 (previously presented) The process of Claim 1 wherein the solvent is acetone.

Claim 5 (previously presented) The process of Claim 1 wherein the base used in the first reaction is potassium carbonate.

Claim 6 (previously presented) The process of Claim 1 wherein the base used for the second reaction is selected from the group consisting of alkali metal hydroxides and alkali metal or alkaline-earth metal alkoxides.

Claim 7 (previously presented) The process of Claim 6 wherein the alkali metal hydroxides are used in aqueous solution.

Cancel **Claim 8**.

Claim 9 (previously presented) The process of Claim 1 wherein, for the second reaction, the temperature is 25°C to 55°C and the volume of water is 1 to 10 liters per kilogram of compound of formula (III).

Claim 10 (previously presented) The process of claim 9 wherein the reaction is performed by applying different successive temperature stages within the range.

Claim 11 (previously presented) The process of Claim 1 wherein the compound of formula (I) is obtained in crystalline form by mixing the reaction medium with a solvent in which the compound of formula (I) is insoluble and which is a diluent for alcohols, and by adjusting the pH of the medium to 0.5 to 2 using an acid.

Claim 12 (previously presented) The process of Claim 11 wherein the solvent is selected from the group consisting of aromatic hydrocarbons, aliphatic hydrocarbons, ethers and acetates.

Claim 13 (previously presented) The process of Claim 11 wherein the acid is hydrochloric acid.

Claim 14 (currently amended) The process of Claim 1 wherein R^1 is phenyl or naphthyl, and R^2 is of 1 to 4 carbon atoms ~~and R^3 is halogen.~~

Claim 15 (previously presented) The process of Claim 14, wherein R^1 is phenyl, R^2 is methyl and R^3 is bromine.

Please add the following claim:

Claim 16 (newly presented) The process of Claim 1 wherein R^3 is selected from the group consisting of halogen, mesylate and tosylate.